

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-04 CU-02 EB-04 /063 W

----- 070298

R 010905Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5712

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 14274

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JA, KS, KN

SUBJECT: ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS

REF: A) TOKYO 13958 B) TOKYO 12305

SUMMARY: INDICATING THAT ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS ARE STILL WORSE THAN EVEN POOR STATE PRIOR TO AUGUST 15 INCIDENT FONOFF OFFICIAL IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES FOR EARLY IMPROVEMENT. GOJ AGREED TO RECENT FORMULA FOR SETTLEMENT OF ROK-JAPAN DISPUTE PRIMARILY ON BASIS OF REGIONAL INTERESTS, INTERESTS WHICH WILL BE REFLECTED IN EMERGING JAPANESE VIEW OF KOREAN PENINSULA. FONOFF FURTHER CLARIFIED "GESTURE" IT HOPES ROK WILL MAKE TO FOSTER AMELIORATION OF ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING CALL BY OUTGOING POLCOUNS AMEMBASSY SEOUL O'DONAHUE ON FONOFF ASIA BUREAU DEP DIRGEN NAKAE AND NE ASIA DIV DIRECTOR SEO, BOTH DESCRIBED ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS AS "WORSE THAN BEFORE AUGUST 15 INCIDENT", NOTING THAT RELATIONS EVEN THEN "WERE NOT GOOD." NAKAE AND SEO WERE GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT ANY SIGNIFICANT
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IMPROVEMENT IN NEAR FUTURE BECAUSE OF CONTINUING AFTER

EFFECTS OF KIM DAE-JUNG AND MUN SE KWANG AFFAIRS. NAKAE EXPLAINED THAT GOJ HAD AGREED TO SHIINA VISIT AND MANNER OF RESOLUTION OF RECENT CRISIS NOT SO MUCH FOR BILATERAL REASONS AS ON BASIS OF BROADER REGIONAL STRATEGIC AND SECURITY INTERESTS, STRONGLY IMPLYING MUTUAL US-JAPAN INTERESTS.

2. NAKAE ALSO INDICATED THAT IN FUTURE FONMIN KIMURA AND GOJ WOULD VIEW KOREAN SITUATION IN MORE CONTEMPORARY, BROADER REGIONAL TERMS AND NOT SO MUCH IN "COLD WAR" TERMINOLOGY WHICH WAS COMMON IN PAST AND IS STILL EMPLOYED BY ROK. ALTHOUGH VAGUE ABOUT NEW TERMINOLOGY, NAKAE EXPRESSED OPINION THAT THIS EMERGING GOJ VIEW OF KOREAN PENINSULA AND FUTURE (UNSPECIFIED) ACTIONS BY GOJ MIGHT WELL CAUSE FURTHER PROBLEMS WITH ROKG.

3. BOTH NAKAE AND SEO SAID THERE MUST BE IMPROVEMENT IN POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE BEFORE GOJ WOULD BE WILLING TO PROCEED WITH ROK-JAPAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE. AS IN REF A, THEY MENTIONED THREE AREAS OF CONCERN: A) KIM DAE-JUNG AFFAIR, B) INVESTIGATION OF FORMER TOKYO EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY KIM DONG WOON, AND C) FATE OF TWO JAPANESE "STUDENTS" IMPRISONED IN ROK. SEO SAID KIMURA HAD NOT STIPULATED THESE THREE PROBLEMS TO ROK AS PRECONDITIONS FOR HOLDING CONFERENCE, BUT CURRENT GOJ VIEW IS THAT SOME GESTURE IN AT LEAST ONE OF THREE AREAS MUST BE MADE BEFORE RELATIONS COULD IMPROVE AND JAPAN WOULD CONSENT TO HOLDING CONFERENCE.

4. NAKAE AND SEO INDICATED INCREASING GOJ CONCERN OVER ROK DOMESTIC SITUATION AND PARK GOVERNMENT STABILITY DURING COMING MONTHS. CURRENT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS SEEM LIKELY TO BE EXACERBATED BY GROWING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES FACING ROK.

5. COMMENT: NAKAE'S COMMENT THAT JAPAN WOULD VIEW KOREA IN BROADER CONTEXT PRESUMABLY REFLECTS FONMIN KIMURA'S ATTEMPT TO RESTATE JAPAN'S ATTITUDE IN TERMINOLOGY WHICH DESCRIBES CURRENT SITUATION IN NE ASIA, ALTERED AS RESULT OF DETENTE AND EVOLVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KOREAS
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AND THE MAJOR POWERS WITH INTERESTS IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA. AS SUCH, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT NEW TERMINOLOGY INDICATES CHANGE OF POLICY BUT RATHER A CHANGE AND UPDATING OF RHETORIC, LOOKING AHEAD. TO CORROBORATE THIS, AT RECENT GOJ ASIAN AMBASSADORS' CONFERENCE, SENIOR FONOFF OFFICIALS AGREED JAPAN SHOULD MAINTAIN CURRENT POLICY TOWARD KOREAS. REGARDING PYONGYANG, THIS MEANS GOJ FAVORS EXPANDING CULTURAL, SPORT, AND

PARLIAMENTARY CONTACTS, BUT GOJ WOULD TAKE NO ACTION WHICH WOULD EXTEND ANY OFFICIAL RECOGNITION TO DPRKG. NAKAE'S VAGUE REFERENCE TO NEW "TERMINOLOGY" IN OFFICIAL GOJ DISCUSSIONS OF KOREA MUST HARK BACK TO THE KIND OF VERBIAGE THAT GOT FONMIN KIMURA IN TROUBLE IN LATE AUGUST -EARLY SEPTEMBER. EVEN IF FORMULATION HAS BEEN FURTHER REFINED, IT IS EASY TO ANTICIPATE NEGATIVE REACTIONS FROM THE KOREANS.

6. ABOVE COMMENTS ON PREREQUISITES TO IMPROVED ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS ELABORATE ON DISCUSSION REF A AND SLIGHTLY CLARIFY INGREDIENTS GOJ SEES AS NECESSARY FOR AMELIORATING RELATIONS.
HODGSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: smithrj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TOKYO14274
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740313-0454
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741177/aaaacnp0.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A) TOKYO 13958 B) TOKYO 12305
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: smithrj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 JUL 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by smithrj>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, JA, KS, KN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005